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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/12/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [EFIN](#) [MASS](#) [LE](#) [QA](#)
SUBJECT: QATAR WILL CONSIDER DEPOSIT IN LEBANON'S CENTRAL
BANK, MEDIATION ROLE

REF: A. STATE 197800

[1](#)B. DOHA 1688

Derived from: DSCG 05-1, B,D.

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Ambassador discussed the crisis in Lebanon with Minister of State Ahmed Al-Mahmoud (number two in the Qatari MFA) December 13. Al-Mahmoud said that Lebanon's Ambassador in Qatar had recently requested that Qatar act as a mediator between the Lebanese government and opposition factions and that Qatar is studying the possibility. Qatar will consider depositing a sum into the Lebanese Central Bank but will not change policy regarding contact with Syrian President al-Asad. End Summary.

Reconstruction Pledge

[1](#)2. (C) Ambassador thanked Al-Mahmoud for Qatar's USD 300 million pledge for reconstruction in Lebanon and asked for an update on disbursements. He also queried Al-Mahmoud regarding any assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces and Internal Security Forces. Al-Mahmoud did not provide any details but said he would look into it. (Note. Post has made repeated requests for updated information on assistance for Lebanon - Ref B.)

Cash Infusion for Lebanon's Central Bank

[1](#)3. (C) Ambassador explained that Lebanon's economic situation is dire and said Qatar can help with a large cash infusion to Lebanon's Central Bank. Al-Mahmoud replied that Qatar had done something similar approximately 10 years ago and will once again "take it into consideration." (Note: Post will follow up with other Qatari officials.)

Receiving President Asad

[1](#)4. (C) Ambassador noted President Bashar al-Asad's visit to Doha December 1 for the opening of the Asian Games. He said Asad is playing a harmful role with respect to Lebanon, and it is better to limit high-level contact with him, particularly during Lebanon's current crisis. Al-Mahmoud replied that Qatar is a part of the Middle East "forever, and we have to find a way to live without isolation." He said Qatar understands that its interests lie with the United States, but "we have to prepare ourselves" for the uncertainties of the future. He noted that Qatar does not believe a Middle East Peace Process is possible without Syria, and thus keeping Asad engaged will have future payoffs in terms of a "sustainable peace." He warned that if no country has contact with Syria, it will strengthen its hard-line position and develop its ties to Iran.

Request for Qatari Mediation?

15. (C) Asked about Qatar's policy toward Lebanon generally, Al-Mahmoud said that Qatar has a "special relationship" with Lebanon and respects its institutions and the outcome of its elections. "We won't side with any country against Lebanon," he said. He confided that the Lebanese Ambassador to Doha contacted him the previous day to request Qatari mediation. He said that Foreign Minister Hamad bin Jassim (HBJ), who is currently in New York, also received a call with the same request. Al-Mahmoud said the Lebanese Ambassador did not provide any details but implied that Qatar's relationship with Damascus was a factor. Nevertheless, Qatar is studying the request. "All sides accept Qatar," he said. "We have no agenda." If Qatar decides to engage in mediation, it will have to work out the procedures, he said. Al-Mahmoud said that this was the first time he had spoken of the request for mediation to someone outside of his own government.

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